

ADOT plans underway for paving Navajo Route 20

NDOT hosted a meeting with ADOT, BIA, Coconino County and FHWA on March 7, regarding the road closure on U.S. 89. Discussions focused on the paving of Navajo Route 20, to provide an interim detour until road construction on U.S. 89 is finalized, which may take up to two years. (Photo by Rick Abasta)



TSE BONITO, N.M.-The next phase of the efforts to restore essential traffic from the road closure on U.S. 89 is underway.

Officials from the Navajo Division of Transportation, Arizona Department of Transportation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Coconino County, and Federal Highway Administration met on March 7, to discuss paving Navajo Route 20 as a detour.

A portion of U.S. 89 failed and the pavement settled on Feb. 20, after an apparent rock slide.

Steve Boschen, ADOT Deputy State Engineer, gave a slideshow presentation on the current status of U.S. 89 repairs.

Scrubbing through photos, he said the slip is 500-feet on top of the road and a quarter mile deep at the base of the hill.

"Our objectives are to restore mobility to the area, both short-term and long-term," Boschen said.

Geotechnical data collection continues at the site and the truck-mounted drill rigs completed eight of 10 borings for sampling. Nine additional high-speed bores were mobilized for their higher capabilities for recovery.

ADOT selected an emergency repair contractor to grade an access road for first responders to utilize during the day. The contractor will also grade the site once all of the preliminary data collections are complete.

Boschen said a survey flight was also conducted to complete a digital terrain map of the area.

Thanks to the Federal Highway Administration, we did get funds in the amount of \$2 million authorized, he said.

ADOT continues geotechnical data collection and estimated completion in two weeks.

The results of the data will provide more insight into providing what he dubbed the "ultimate repair" of U.S. 89.

"Our objective is to restore essential traffic as soon as possible," Boschen said. "The anticipated detour duration is two years.

"We do think that we can get another fix on U.S. 89 in two years, so that's our goal," he added.

The immediate plan is to pave 27-miles of dirt road on the existing alignment of N20. The combination of clay and sand in the area has resulted in some commercial vehicles getting stuck in the past few weeks.

Accidents on N20 have also been reported.

Other considerations of the design criteria for paving N20 include the drainage and low points of the road where water could collect. The need to flatten vertical curves was also a concern.

"I noticed one that was a compound vertical and horizontal curve and we want to fix that because those are dangerous curves," Boschen said.

ADOT also plans to review opportunities for left turn lanes at N21, N6210, N201, and N6211.

Taking into consideration the needs from self-employed Navajo vendors in the area, the design team is looking into access control and consolidating roadside stands.

"We know that there's going to be a need for some vendors to use N20 as opposed to U.S. 89," he said.

NDOT and BIA shared a feasibility report of N20 with ADOT, in addition to right-of-way alignments, geotechnical data reports, and a N20 Keyhole Markup Language Zipped file providing GIS data.

ADOT needs to conduct additional soil samples along N20 to de-

sign a pavement that will last two to three years. The relatively short lifespan of the road reflects usage by commercial trucks.

“Once we get it done we want to put an overlay on it so that it’s good for the traffic that will happen after we solve the ultimate,” Boschén said.

He emphasized the main purpose of the meeting was to gain a consensus on the design criteria to restore essential traffic.

ADOT will develop a Joint Powers Agreement with NDOT and BIA to cover construction and maintenance of N20 until U.S. 89 construction is completed.

They have also requested supporting resolutions from the affected chapters.

Because of the quick turnaround time needed for the detour, ADOT is pursuing Construction Manager at-Risk or Design-Build methodologies to get N20 paved.

Robert Samour, senior deputy state engineer for ADOT, said they are taking a three-prong approach: restoring essential emergency response through the site, discussion of N20 as an alternate route, and getting U.S. 89 reopened.

“ **When the road gets turned back to the Navajo Nation, we don’t see that traffic going away.** ”

“I do think one thing to expedite our ability to get out there and pave (N20) would be to avoid any deviation from the current existing alignment,” Samour said. “If we stayed within the existing alignment, we could be paving a lot faster.”

Representatives from the Coppermine Chapter were to the point in lending support to ADOT’s efforts on N20.

“Gap-Bodaway is working on their resolution and Coppermine, we already have ours in. LeChee is also working on theirs,” said Lola Smith, vice president of Coppermine Chapter.

Chapter president Floyd Stevens said, “We just came for an answer and that answer is yes. Our response is, ‘Let’s do it.’”

NDOT Civil Engineer Darryl Bradley said although plans are in flux and information is still being gathered, the need to move forward with an approach must continue.

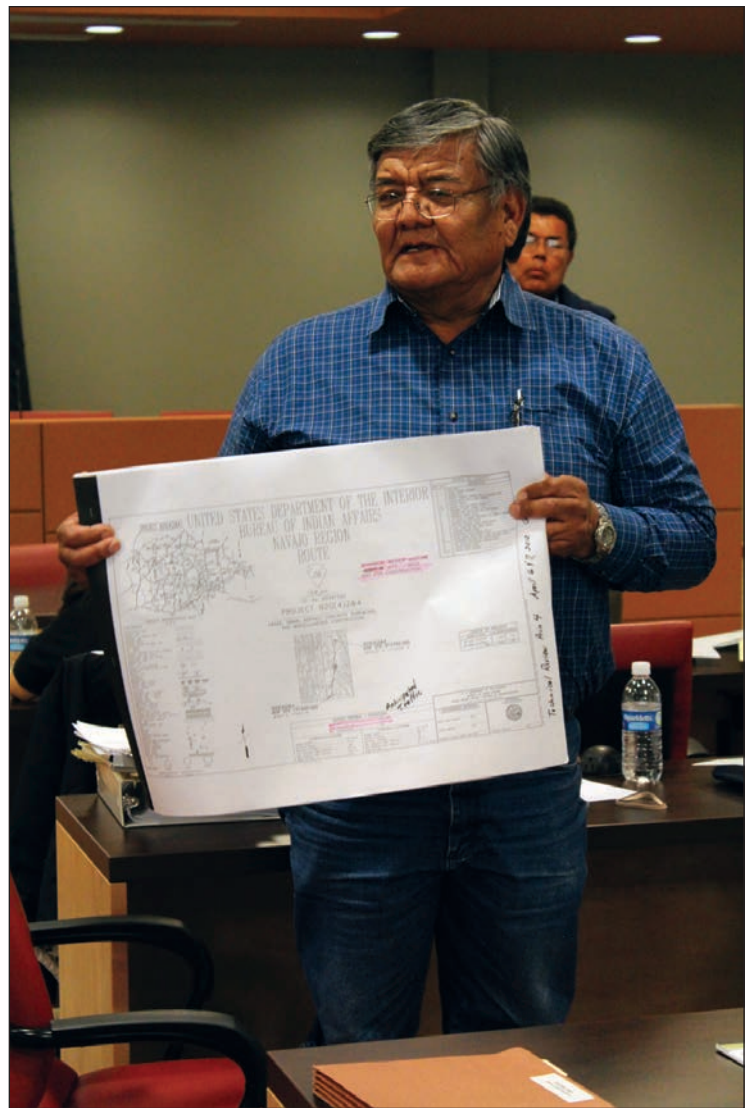
“When the road gets turned back to the Navajo Nation, we don’t see that traffic going away. Increased volume of traffic, that’s our concern,” Bradley said.

For now, the focus will remain on maintenance of N20 until the paving activities take place.

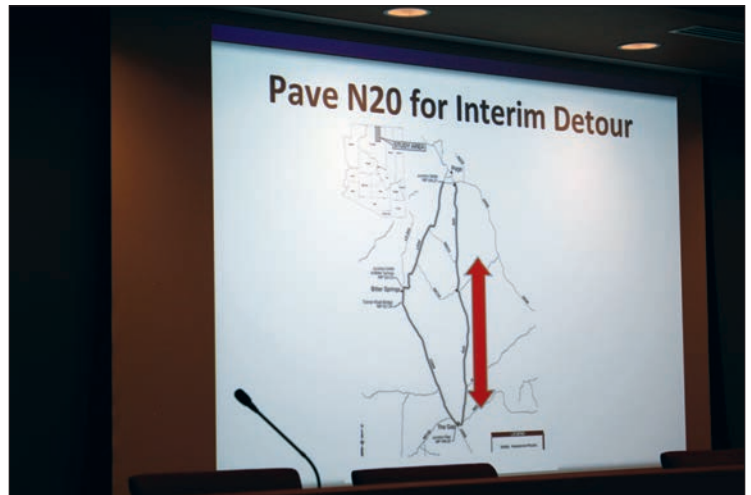
ADOT plans on having N20 paving completed by the summer to begin receiving traffic from U.S. 89.

Reduced speed limits will be utilized in the interest of safety, especially because of the conditions of the current road alignment.

Information: www.navajodot.org



Floyd Stevens, Coppermine Chapter President, said his community fully supports the paving of N20 by the Arizona Department of Transportation, emergency detour route or otherwise. Stevens holds a feasibility study conducted by Western Pacific, which was consulted by the chapter to look into paving the 27 mile stretch of dirt road connecting Bodaway-Gap with LeChee. (Photo by Rick Abasta)



The Arizona Department of Transportation presented materials on paving N20 as an interim detour until the construction on U.S. 89 is completed. Estimated timeframe for the construction is about two years, according to Steve Boschén, deputy state engineer for ADOT. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

